

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08

INR-07 LAB-04 NSAE-00 SIL-01 PA-01 PRS-01 USIA-06

SS-15 SP-02 NSC-05 /086 W

-----010014 161342Z /50

R 161150Z NOV 77

FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4933

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USMISSION GENEVA

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

AMCONSUL IBADAN

AMCONSUL KADUNA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 LAGOS 13313

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, PINT, NI, UR

SUBJECT: NIGERIAN UNIONS OFF TO SLOW START

REF: LAGOS A-100, NOVEMBER 5, 1977

SUMMARY: THE PAST PROBLEMS OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT IN NIGERIA APPEARED TO SURFACE AGAIN DURING THE FIRST TWO WEEKS IN NOVEMBER AS THE FMG'S EFFORT TO REORGANIZE THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT PROGRESSED. MANY UNIONS COULD NOT ELECT NEW LEADERS BECAUSE OF INTERNAL CONFLICTS, MANY UNIONS TOOK ISSUE WITH THE FEDERAL MILITARY GOVERNMENT'S POLICY, AND THE SOVIET EMBASSY WAS ACTIVE, IN AT LEAST SOME INSTANCES, IN ATTEMPTING TO INFLUENCE ELECTIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. IN ACCORDANCE WITH GOVERNMENT-ANNOUNCED GUIDELINES, THE INAUGURAL CONFERENCES OF 43 INDUSTRIAL UNIONS WERE  
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HELD BETWEEN OCTOBER 31 AND NOVEMBER 12, 1977, IN BENIN CITY, ENUGU, IBADAN, KADUNA AND LAGOS. THESE MEETINGS BROUGHT REPRESENTATIVES OF THE APPROXIMATELY 1,000 FORMER UNIONS INTO NEW INDUSTRIAL-BASED ORGANIZATIONS FOR WORKERS.  
(SEE EMBASSY'S A-77 OF AUGUST 20, 1977)

2. ALTHOUGH MANY OF THE MEETINGS TOOK PLACE WITHOUT

DIFFICULTY, OTHERS WERE MARKED BY DISAGREEMENTS, IN SOME CASES FIGHTS BETWEEN VARIOUS FACTIONS, AND ADJOURNMENT OF SOME MEETINGS WITHOUT ELECTING OFFICERS. ON THE BASIS OF DISCUSSIONS WITH A MINISTRY OF LABOR OFFICIAL, LOCAL MEDIA REPORTING AND CONTACTS WITH UNION OFFICIALS BY EMBASSY'S POLITICAL LABOR ASSISTANT, THE BASIS FOR DISAGREEMENT APPEARS TO VARY AMONG ORGANIZATIONS. THREE CLEAR THEMES WERE PREVALENT. SOME OF THE OLD UNIONS DO NOT WISH TO BE JOINED WITH OTHER OBVIOUSLY "INFERIOR" GROUPS OF WORKERS WHO DO NOT SHARE THE SAME INTERESTS AND CONCERNS. SPLITS AMONG LEADERS OF OLD UNIONS ENGAGED IN ORGANIZING THE SAME WORKERS ALSO RE-EMERGED. PERHAPS MOST IMPORTANTLY, THE OLD LEFTIST-ORIENTED AND WESTERN-ORIENTED UNION OFFICIALS FOUND THEMSELVES ONCE MORE AT ODDS IN ATTEMPTING TO ORGANIZE UNITED TRADE UNION ORGANIZATIONS.

3. EMBASSY'S REPAIRGRAM REPORTED AN INCREASED INTEREST BY THE SOVIET EMBASSY IN THE LABOR MOVEMENT AND AN ALLEGED OFFER BY A SOVIET OFFICIAL TO FINANCE LEADERS IN KEY INDUSTRIAL AREAS. EMBASSY POLITICAL LABOR ASSISTANT WHO ATTENDED SOME INAUGURAL CONFERENCES WITNESSED SOVIET EMBASSY OFFICER PASSING FUNDS TO OLD NIGERIAN TRADE UNION CONGRESS ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY, M. OLUDARE KING, OUTSIDE OF MEETING HALL -- APPARENTLY FOR PURPOSE OF BUYING VOTES IN NATIONAL UNION OF TEXTILE, GARMENT AND TAILORING WORKERS MEETING IN KADUNA. HE HEARD FROM OTHER

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SOURCES THAT SOVIET EMBASSY OFFICER ALSO PROVIDED FUNDS TO INFLUENCE THE ELECTION OF IRON AND STEEL WORKERS UNION OF NIGERIA.

4. A KEY ISSUE THAT CAUSED DISRUPTION IN SOME UNION MEETINGS WAS FMG'S PROPOSAL THAT IT PASS ON APPOINTMENT OF UNION SECRETARIES-GENERAL, HIGHEST LEVEL PAID STAFF. ISSUE WAS REPORTED IN PRESS AS GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENT OF SECRETARY-GENERAL MINISTRY OF LABOR OFFICIAL (SOMEWHAT DISINGENUOUSLY WE SUSPECT) TOLD EMBASSY OFFICER THAT FMG'S INTENTION WAS TO "ASSIST" UNIONS IN WEEDING OUT CORRUPT OR UNSKILLED CANDIDATES TO INSURE RELIABLE UNION LEADERSHIP. WHILE FMG APPROVES QUALIFIED CANDIDATES, UNIONS ARE TO MAKE FINAL SELECTIONS. SOME UNIONS HAVE ANNOUNCED APPOINTMENT OF SECRETARIES-GENERAL WITHOUT AWAITING RESULTS OF CONSULTATION WITH MINISTRY OF LABOR. IT IS UNCLEAR AT THIS STAGE HOW THIS ISSUE WILL BE RESOLVED, BUT MINISTRY OFFICIAL ASSURED EMBASSY THAT MINISTRY DESIRES TO AVOID CONFRONTATION AND SHOULD BE ABLE TO SETTLE MATTER WITH UNIONS.

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INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08  
INR-07 LAB-04 NSAE-00 SIL-01 PA-01 PRS-01 USIA-06  
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-----010048 161341Z /50

R 161150Z NOV 77  
FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4934  
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AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
USMISSION GENEVA  
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK  
AMCONSUL IBADAN  
AMCONSUL KADUNA

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5. EMBOFF DISCUSSED TRADE UNION REORGANIZATION WITH RESPONSIBLE MINISTRY OF LABOR OFFICIAL WHO STRESSED FMG'S CONTINUING DESIRE TO AVOID FOREIGN CONTACTS WITH LOCAL LABOR MOVEMENT ECHOING EARLIER COMMENTS BY OFFICER RESPONSIBLE FOR INTERNATIONAL LABOR RELATIONS IN MINISTRY, HE SPECIFICALLY ENJOINED EMBOFF NOT TO HAVE WIDE CONTACTS WITHIN THE MINISTRY OR TO SEEK CONTACTS WITH TRADE UNION OFFICIALS. HE ALSO SAID, HOWEVER, THAT FMG ANTICIPATED THAT INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS FOR UNIONS WOULD BE AUTHORIZED NEXT YEAR.

6. COMMENT: HISTORICALLY THE NIGERIAN TRADE UNION MOVEMENT HAS BEEN CHARACTERIZED BY DIVISIVE TRENDS, CONTINUING FRICTION BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE UNIONS, AND FOREIGN INVOLVEMENT IN THE DOMESTIC LABOR SCENE. IN THE INITIAL MEETINGS OF GOVERNMENT-IMPOSED TRADE UNION ORGANIZATION, THESE HISTORIC PROBLEMS HAVE REAPPEARED. FMG/UNION DISAGREEMENTS ON SECRETARIES-GENERAL WERE SYMPTOMATIC OF CONTINUING STRUGGLE  
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BETWEEN TRADITIONAL TRADE UNION LEADERS AND GOVERNMENT FOR

CONTROL OF TRADE UNION MOVEMENT. CONTINUING STRIFE AMONG UNION  
FACTIONS BASED ON BOTH IDEOLOGICAL AND PERSONAL POWER DISPUTES  
REFLECTS THE DIVISIVE TREND. PRESENCE OF SOVIET EMBASSY  
OFFICIAL AT TWO MEETINGS SUGGESTS SOVIETS INTEND TO CONTINUE  
INVOLVEMENT IN DOMESTIC TRADE UNION ACTIVITY EVEN THOUGH THEY  
PRESUMABLY KNOW FMG DOES NOT APPROVE OF FOREIGN INVOLVEMENT  
AT THIS TIME.  
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**Review Markings:**  
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